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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 ANKARA 001104

SIPDIS

HQ USCENTCOM FOR GENERAL BELL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2029

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR 3-4 MARCH VISIT OF US ARMY EUROPE  
AND 7TH ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL B.B. BELL TO ANKARA AND  
ISTANBUL

REF: CDRUSAREUR 231726Z FEB 05

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman; Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) Summary: While your visit comes on the heels of a series US visits since the first of the year (Deputy Secretary of State Armitage, NATO Supreme Allied Commander

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General Jones, Commander US Central Command General Abizaid, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Feith and Secretary of State Rice), it is unique in that it is the most significant Army to Army engagement since before the Spring of 2003. You arrive in Turkey as we begin to recalibrate bilateral relations emphasizing renewed dialogue on areas of mutual concern to maximize achievable cooperation. Our task is complicated by a widespread antipathy to our policies and a Turkish Government that has only recently begun to reaffirm the value of the U.S.-Turkish publicly, after a period where it at times joined the choir publicly condemning us. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) was not much better, privately voicing its support, but careful not to get out ahead of the Government publicly. In late January the TGS Deputy Chief made a bold statement of support for the relationship, but we are waiting to see if this is a beginning of a pattern or an aberration. The reinvigoration of Army-to-Army engagement is therefore, a welcome and timely building block to this effort. End Summary.

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POLITICAL LANDSCAPE  
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2. (S) Given General Buyukanit's nickname of "weathervane," it is difficult to accurately gauge the sincerity of his feelings towards restoring the U.S.-Turkey Mil to Mil relationship to its pre-March, 2003 levels. Buyukanit, while charismatic, popular within the Army and adept at working the press, is also successful at playing his political cards close to his vest, and consequently has avoided becoming attached to politically controversial positions. Members of his staff assert to us that he strongly favors returning to a robust military relationship with the U.S. Leading candidate to be the next CHOD like Buyukanit traditionally reveal little of their own ideas to avoid spoiling their chances with controversy. He will also grip and grin with the best of them in welcoming you.

3. (S) Despite resentment and suspicion of AKP by the military and other elements of the secular elite, Prime Minister Erdogan appears unassailable; he has a two-thirds majority in parliament; he remains highly popular; his government continues to reform Turkey's political and social space - at least on the books; and he has pursued an activist foreign policy. The cracks within his party and internal dissension are growing, however. The effective opposition is the military, and TGS Chief Ozkok, while a solidly pro-Atlanticist senior commander, has been reluctant to take on the government publicly for fear of derailing Turkey's EU accession prospects and thereby losing popular support for the military. Deputy Chief of the General Staff General Basbug's (in line to become CHOD in 2008 after General Buyukanit), repeated emphasis on the breadth, depth, and importance of relations with the U.S. during his January 26 televised press conference (the first such televised briefing), likely signals a shift in this TGS reluctance to confront the government publicly. General Buyukanit, in line to succeed General Ozkok in 2006, is somewhat of an unknown quantity, but can be assumed to be viewed by General Ozkok as being of similar thinking. He was DCHOD and, therefore our primary operational interlocutor, in the run up to OIF. His actions at that time were not always helpful. General Ozkok has moved step-by-step to try to bring more modern thinkers into senior ranks, but left-nationalist sentiments are strong at lower ranks.

4. (S) The Wall Street Journal's publication on Feb. 16 of a negative article on Turkey's lack of appreciation for its relationship with the US, written by a WSJ editor who accompanied USDP Feith to Turkey on Jan. 31, received widespread condemnation in the Turkish government. J-5 Strategy Division Chief MG Cengiz Arslan called the article

"poisonous" and warned it would negatively impact US perceptions of Turkey. While not acknowledging any responsibility for Turkey's negative portrayal in the article, the government has responded with public statements of support for the bilateral relationship and refrained from the negative public comments that dominated the press last fall. This, combined with the positive press coverage received by Secretary Rice following her Feb. 5-6 visit, may reflect a deliberate GOT shift towards a more constructive relationship.

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Iraq Dominates the Agenda  
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15. (C) The Turkish Government shares the goal of a unified, prosperous, democratic Iraq, at peace internally and with its neighbors, and contributed to international pressure on the Sunnis to participate in the elections. However, the Turks worry about long-term US staying power in Iraq, that events there could spiral out of control, and that Ankara could be faced with either a Shia-dominated government that they assert will tilt dangerously toward Iran, an intensified movement toward an independent Kurdish state emanating from northern Iraq, or both. Turkish Army leaders will possibly seek your assurance that our military remain committed to ensuring a stable -- and unified -- Iraq whatever the outcome of the elections.

16. (C) Owing to a feeling of Sunni solidarity, preference for the "stability" of Saddam, and influence of misinformation about U.S. intentions, ninety percent of the Turkish public opposed the effort to oust Saddam Hussein and sentiment against coalition operations in Iraq still runs deep. Most Turks get their information on events in Iraq from a press that is biased against the US-led effort and full of reporting based on unsubstantiated half-truths or lies, (much of it sourced from al-Jazeera or similarly biased sources) as well as a steady stream of reports on the kidnapping and killing of Turkish truck drivers (over 70 deaths as of March 2005). Despite the presence of Turkish Liaison Officers (LNOs) assigned to Task Force Olympia (TFO) (now Task Force Freedom), and MNF-I who received up-to-date reports on the October 2004 coalition action in Tal Afar, both the Turkish public and government expressed outrage at the operation, based on false stories of civilian casualties and violent US treatment of residents. To address the misinformation, and in hopes that Turkish officials would do likewise, the mission established a system of providing periodic cleared information on coalition operations to Turkish government and military officials, and to the press. This effort may have contributed to Turkish military silence during the subsequent operation in Fallujah and the less vitriolic Turkish government response. Additionally, we are in the process of employing CENTRIX into the TGS Headquarters to further this information sharing effort.

17. (C) Turning a corner?: The December death of five Turkish policemen enroute to Baghdad to take up security duties at the Turkish Embassy shocked the country. The Turkish government and military (General Ozkok sent a personal note of thanks to General Myers), made a point to thank the US for the swift TFO response, including killing or capturing of some insurgents, aiding the wounded and repatriating the bodies of the policemen killed. Additionally, the Turkish military was quick to tell the mission that Turkish First Army Commander General Tolon's accusations of US responsibility did not reflect the Turkish General Staff position. Turkish press reporting on the incident was generally factual. The November establishment of trilateral (US/TU/IZ) talks on Turkish truck driver safety, with the participation of Multinational Force - Iraq (MNF-I), opened the door to cooperative information sharing and other efforts to support the drivers.

18. (C) Additionally, Turkey has provided valuable assistance on Iraq. Ankara offered to send peacekeeping troops to Iraq in October 2003, approved the use of Incirlik Air Base of tankers to refuel aircraft on support missions for both Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), authorized the transit of U.S. troops from Iraq on rotation out, and permits the transit of humanitarian goods and supplies for coalition forces via the border crossing at Habur Gate. Turkey is active in reconstruction efforts, including providing electricity for Iraq, and training in Turkey of Iraqi diplomats, Sunni political groups and, as its contribution to the NATO training mission, Iraqi security forces. The EU decision on December 17 to begin accession negotiations with Turkey on Oct. 3, 2005, may have provided the starting point for a small, but perceptible positive shift in relations. While government officials still refrain from publicly supporting US policies or actions in Iraq, they have been adding less fuel to the fire. In meetings with then DepSecState Armitage and General Abizaid, both Turkish government and military officials reaffirmed the importance of our bilateral relationship and called for close dialogue

on issues of mutual interest.

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PKK - Unfulfilled Promises and New Direction  
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19. (S) Turkish government and military leaders understand that responsibility for dealing with terrorists within Iraq will increasingly pass to the Iraqis, and their agreement to host the Jan. 11 trilateral PKK talks was a positive sign that they will work together with the Iraqis on this shared problem. Still, they, and the public at large, remain bitter over their perception that the US has taken no steps to fulfill President Bush's June 2004 reiteration of the U.S. pledge that Iraq will no longer be a base for terrorist operations against Turkey and they expect the US to remain engaged in the effort. Some in the Turkish military harbor the belief that the US acquiesces to (or supports) the PKK's presence in Iraq, continually citing unsubstantiated reports of US/PKK meetings. However, when pressed, they are unable to provide any names or specifics. (NOTE: We also know that the military uses our lack of action against PKK/Kongra-Gel to needle the current AK Government.)

110. (S) When confronted with this issue, you should make reference to the Jan. 11 trilateral talks where, with the US role in Iraq more one of facilitator than actor, the Turks and Iraqis focused on concrete steps to pave the way for actions against the PKK, including establishing an intelligence-sharing mechanism and holding a legal experts meeting after the Jan. 30 elections, (on hold until the Iraqi Transitional Government is formed) to discuss issues related to closure of PKK front offices and media outlets in northern Iraq and the handling of known PKK terrorists who are arrested.

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Global War on Terrorism  
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111. (C) Turkey took command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) VII in Afghanistan on Feb. 13 and will retain command until August 2005, during which time it will contribute over 1,600 troops. Ankara has twice offered to lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan, but location proved to be a problem - the GOT was only willing to consider a PRT in the north while the Alliance would prefer Turkey locate its PRT in the west or the south. With sufficient pledges of ISAF Stage II expansion of PRTs in the west already in hand, we need to encourage Turkey to consider contributing elsewhere. Ankara is already preparing a significant assistance package for the Afghan War College; we should encourage the Turks to consider a PRT in the south as well.

112. (C) Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq, the US and Turkey coordinate military assistance to Georgia and Azerbaijan, improving their abilities to protect important energy transport routes. Turkey subscribes to every arms control arrangement it is eligible to join, including the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), under which it is considering hosting an exercise in 2006. (We had hoped that the Turks would hold this in the Black Sea, especially given their own OAE-like Operation Black Sea Harmony and their leadership in focusing the BLACKSEAFOR organization on prevention of trafficking. However, they have been reluctant to facilitate non-littoral states' operations in the Black Sea and the PSI exercise looks likely to occur in the Mediterranean.) Ankara has also been supportive of international efforts to press Iran to meet its commitments to the IAEA, although they are more inclined to persuasion than coercion, fully backing the EU-3 dialogue. Turkey has also taken seriously information about Turks' involvement in the AQ Khan network and is moving toward prosecution of these individuals.

113. (U) The Turkish military's Partnership for Peace Training Center in Ankara provides counterterrorism and other training to personnel from PfP partner countries. The military has established a NATO Center of Excellence-Defense Against Terrorism (COE-DAT), that will provide more specialized training opportunities for both NATO partner nations and Allies. The inaugural course at the COE-DAT will be in the third week of March. (LTG Broadwater is the guest speaker). While this is not a Turkish Land Forces responsibility it is possible that you may be asked for U.S. instructor support for this center. Currently the TRADOC LNO, a U.S. Army Major, is serving part time as the Deputy Director/Project Officer in lieu of appointment of a permanent O6. The TGS has also offered training at the COE-DAT as Ankara's contribution to NATO's Iraq training mission.

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TURKISH LAND FORCES  
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14. (C) The 400,000 man Turkish Land Forces has since the late 1990s, when the current CHOD, General Ozkok, was its commander, been struggling to modernize both its equipment and organization. While the term 'modernization' has traditionally meant to the TLF equipment acquisition, since 2003 it has also encompassed organizational and Command and Control transformation. However, due to a combination of economic constraints and internal resistance progress has been halting at best. In the Summer of 2003 the Turkish Defense Industries (SSM) withdrew the RFPs for three major procurement projects, 40 UAVs, 1000 main battle tanks (MBT) and 145 attack helicopters. On 10 February 2005 SSM reopened a tender to buy 50 attack helicopters with an option to buy 41 more, but in an RFP with ostensibly non-negotiable terms that will make it difficult for U.S. firms to bid on. The Tender has a deadline of 10 June 2005. With regard to the MBT, SSM initiated a study last summer to examine the feasibility of Turkish industry building the MBT. However, the potential acquisition of 249 Leopard 2A4 MBTs from Germany has put this project as well as the \$ 700 million modernization contract for 170 M60A1 MBTs with Israel in question. A revised tender for 10 UAVs and 3 ground systems was issued in Nov. '04 and received the participation of a U.S. and an Israeli firm. We expect a decision by the end of March.

15. (C) The major organizational transformation effort in the TLF is centered around a strength reduction initiative by the CHOD, General Ozkok. Last May he directed a 10% reduction of the Land Forces to be realized by the abolishment of four brigades and the Aegean Army HQs in Izmir. While there has also been much discussion of transforming the TAF into an all-volunteer force this is not likely to happen anytime soon due to costs and the view within the TGS that conscription serves as a valuable socialization process. Minister of National Defense Gonul stated "in the foreseeable future there are no plans for an all volunteer army." However, as a cost saving measure the TGS did already reduce the personnel strength of its armed forces by 17% by shortening the compulsory military service from 18 months to 15 months, reducing the conscript personnel across the Turkish Armed Forces from 685,000 to 569,000. Efforts within the TGS to establish an integrated Command Information System infrastructure have been under way and it is likely that you will be briefed on the progress of this undertaking at Turkish Land Forces Headquarters.

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CYPRUS and NATO/EU  
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16. (C) The European Union at the December 17 Summit agreed to open accession talks with Turkey in October, marking a major step forward in anchoring Turkey's future and in our strategic vision for Turkey and the region. However, before talks begin, the EU expects Turkey to sign a protocol extending the EU Association agreement to the 10 new EU members, including the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey is dissatisfied with the EU's handling of this issue, with several European leaders indicating publicly that extending the protocol would constitute recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. Moreover, Turkey sees the EU as failing to fulfill its pledge to ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots following their vote in favor of a settlement last April. As a result, Ankara is blocking Cyprus' entry into nonproliferation regimes that the EU desires to include all its members. Similarly, taking a legalistic view of North Atlantic council decisions related to Berlin Plus, the GOT is blocking Cyprus from participating in NATO-EU fora, effectively blocking dialogue between the two organizations. While some Turkish officials recognize how keeping NATO and the EU apart hurts Turkey's interests, to date Cyprus policy has won out over alliance management considerations within the GOT. Last month General Buyukanit was on television announcing that Turkey will not withdraw one soldier from northern Cyprus until there is a Cyprus solution.

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ECONOMY  
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17. (U) The Turkish economy has recovered strongly from the financial crisis of 2000-2001. Real GDP grew by over 8% in 2004 and inflation has declined from a high of 70% in 2001 to under 9% last year. Despite this progress, the recovery remains vulnerable due to a large current account deficit (about 5 percent of GDP) and a large debt with a short maturity structure. Unemployment and poverty remain high, and ordinary people have not felt much benefit yet from the overall macroeconomic improvement. Turkey remains a strategic hub in the global energy supply network. About 5% of the world's traded oil passes through the Turkish Straits and an additional 1 million barrels per day will start flowing from Azerbaijan to the Turkish port of Ceyhan when the BTC pipeline is completed this year.

118. (U) Due to historic economic/political volatility and opaque regulatory/judicial systems, Turkey has long received less foreign direct investment than other countries of similar size and potential. Many in the Turkish elite are convinced that there will be a flood of foreign investment in the wake of the EU's December decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey in October. However, this is unlikely to materialize unless more is done in the area of structural reform. In addition, Turkey will shoulder tremendous challenges in the accession negotiations, given that EU accession will affect nearly every aspect of Turks' lives, and that it may in the end be quite costly for Turkey to comply with EU directives in environmental protection and other areas.

119. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.  
EDELMAN